1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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CHAPTER XI

ECONOMICS: RESOURCES

ALFRED MARSHALL, discussing possible definitions of Economics, says: 'The less we trouble ourselves with scholastic inquiries as to whether a certain consideration comes within the scope of economics, the better.'[1] If any student of society is entitled to follow this practical advice it is the anthropologist. Clearly, his working definition of economics must be as wide and fluid as possible. In his field every fact referring to what Marshall would call the 'business side of life' must claim his attention; even apparently irrelevant details in the technique of production, exchange, or consumption may be significant because new and not hitherto examined under the aspect of economic problems. Such a wide definition of economics must do justice to three realms of facts: (1) the primary resources, in the sense of the physical substratum on which all productive activity ultimately depends; (2) the technical processes and forms of group organization which make up production in the narrow sense, i.e. which actuate and bring into existence the resources; and (3) the specific needs that exist in a society and on the satisfaction of which the efficiency of a productive system must prove itself.

This, then, will be our definition of the realm of economics: the utilization of resources for the satisfaction of culturally (or socially) standardized needs. The description of the needs themselves, elements of culture as they are, is part of the general description of the society. The relation between resources and the satisfaction of the needs will be examined under the heading of Economic Balance. In the description of the technical processes, however, we shall have to limit our field. In accordance with the general theme of this book we shall be concerned more with the group organization involved in production than with technology proper; we shall view productive labour under the aspect of human occupation rather than under the aspect of technical development. The description of the primary resources and their distribution will form the subject of this first section. It will examine above all that primary and ultimate resource of every productive system, savage or civilized, land.[2]

[1] A. Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, 1930, p. 27.

[2] For various reasons I have thought it better to omit from this book a discussion on hunting and fishing. Hunting is indeed of little importance in the present-day productive system of the country; it has been reduced everywhere to a secondary additional activity in the nature almost of a leisure-time occupation. In some parts of the country (e.g. in Bida and surroundings) hunting has disappeared altogether. Fishing stands in a different category. It is of paramount importance in the riverain area. But a description of the greatly varying fishing techniques in use in Nupe country, and of the very specific forms of labour organization involved in fishing, would lead too far. For the economic system of the country at large fishing becomes important in so far as it produces one of the most highly valued trading-goods of the country both in local and export trade. This aspect of fishing will best be discussed at a later stage, in the chapter on trade.

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Hunting and Fishing

224 Hunting is a significant if minor activity in some villages where it is practised by the special guild of hunters under their hereditary head *ndace*, "father of the hunters"). Nets, traps, bows-and-arrows, and occasionally flintlocks are used. Among the separated sections of the Nupe in the more sparsely populated areas, e.g., the Ebe and Basa-Nge, hunting plays a much more important part in the local economy. In the country surrounding Bida hunting has disappeared altogether.

226 The smaller rivers and creeks of Nupe country are rich in fish,[16] which are caught by spear, line, and basket; larger fish are also caught by traps and seine nets. The Kyedye use hooks laid in lines of about 100. The Bataci fish mainly in pools to which special rights attach (see below, p. 40). Nupe women trade dried [439] fish to the Igbona (Yoruba) area of Ilorin Emirate. Dried fish are also exported to Ilorin and farther south from Pategi-Lafiagi.

Markets and Trade[17]

443 Bida town has six markets, including one night market, and every other town and village has its regular market. Specialist traders travel long distances to the markets, though women who trade only as a side-line rarely attend markets more than 10 miles from their homes. Villages on the trade routes to places such as Bida or Ilorin become "relay stations" at which local traders sell to wholesalers. The stores of the European and Asiatic traders are centres for the marketing of commercial crops.

441 Specialist traders are usually men and women from Bida town. Those who go 443 outside Nupe country may stay months or years in one place, sometimes forming a Nupe enclave. There is a distinction between traders and brokers (*dilali*); the latter undertake to sell goods on commission and are organized under a guild-head.

435 Market prices are well defined and those of local produce fluctuate by season. But many goods have fixed prices and bargaining is rare except for the expensive, more rarely sold commodities.[18] Prices in Bida market are nearly always higher than in the country districts. In the country districts food prices are commonly quoted in cowries, the exchange value of which varies.

439 Railways, river steamers, and road transport have become important for market- 49 ing and in the development of production, and Nupe country is an important transit area in the north–south trade across Nigeria. The Kyedye[19] sub-tribe have a monopoly of the river traffic. Muregi is an important ferry point for Hausa traders. The ferrying rights and duties pass from compound to compound in a cycle which, together with the ferrying fees, is regulated by the Chief of the Kyedye and the village head of Muregi. The Kakanda, who are traders, formerly had the monopoly of the river traffic south of Egan, but now share this with the Kyedye. The Basa-Nge[20] also trade by canoe: their exports are handled by Nupe, Kakanda, and Igbira canoe owners, and include palm kernels, palm-oil, and cotton to Lokoja and Itobe, yams, maize, and beans to Onitsha.

439 Exports from Nupe country consist mainly of agricultural produce—rice, shea-nuts, good quality kola-nuts, smoked fish—and products of the local industries, cloth, straw hats, mats, etc. Imports include foodstuffs, mainly palm-oil, salt, and cheap kola-nuts, also potash and livestock. Re-exports include potash and beans from the north to the south, and palm-oil, salt, and kola-nuts from the south to the north. The import or export trade in one commodity is generally combined with a return trade in another.

[16] See Hermon-Hodge, 1929, p. 181 for a list of Niger fish with their Nupe names.

[17] This section is based mainly on Nadel, 1942, pp. 314–34, and relates to the period before the 1939–45 war.

[18] But according to Malam Aliyu Bida, Nupe are excellent bargainers and are known to the Hausa as *Masu Kolo Kolo*, "the hagglers."

[19] Notes on Kede District, 1950.

[20] Hopkins, 1934.

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its distinctive character; nor do they share the position of political supremacy which the down-stream Kede have assumed. They are, culturally, a semi-riverain group, like all the other Nupe sections whose villages lie interspersed between Kede settlements, and politically, again like these sections, subjects of the (down-stream) Kede ruling group. Thus when we shall speak in the following of the Kede political organization, we shall refer to this latter group only. The upper-stream Kede will be classified under one heading with the other semi-riverain Nupe sections, as, indeed, in native eyes, they are closer to the *kintsozi* than to the 'alien' immigrant group on the lower river. But the comparison of the two Kede groups will become of special significance at a later stage of this analysis. This strikingly unequal development in what appear to be two sections of the same tribal group should help us to isolate the factors, social or otherwise, that have moulded the political structure which we are studying.

III. Economic System

A demographic and political constellation such as we have discovered in Kede country is clearly the result of considerable group movements, possibly covering a long period. To be fully understood, such situation demands, first of all, an analysis—historical analysis, if possible—of tribal settlement. Before discussing Kede settlement, however, it is necessary to give a short description of the economic situation in the country. For, as I propose to show, the nature of Kede economics has decisively influenced the planning of Kede settlement and, indirectly, the whole political development of the tribe.

We can be very short as regards the economic system of the semi-riverain groups. They are in the main farmers, who cultivate the fertile marshland areas in the river valley. They are, besides, fishermen on a small scale, fishing from their small dug-out canoes in the backwaters and creeks of Niger and Kaduna—never in the main river, where the Kede alone are entitled to fish.

The Kede, on the other hand, are fishermen and canoemen of renown. Their name is known all down the River Niger, in districts far outside Nupe country;[1] and in their own part of the

[1] Their familiarity with the river has led to a considerable number of Kede being employed as sailors, skippers, and pilots by the Royal Niger Company and the Nigerian Marine Department.

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world they have almost monopolized river traffic.[1] Let me say a few words about the river trade which Kede canoes have carried for centuries up and down the River Niger: comparatively few of the trade goods are destined for inland trade; the majority come from and go to places outside Nupe country. The Kede ship south: gowns (of Hausa and Nupe make), horses from Hausa, potash from Lake Chad, Nupe-made mats and straw hats, fish and rice from the Niger; and north: kola nuts from the markets in Southern Nigeria, European salt, and palm oil.

In this river traffic the Kede canoeman assumes two different roles: he is either a contractor who hires his canoe and crew (consisting of himself and his family members) out to a trader for a specific journey or he is both trader and contractor in one, carrying his own goods on his own craft. A variety of the first kind of occupation is the extensive ferry service which the Kede have established in certain places: here the Kede canoemen carry people, goods, and animals across the river for a small payment.[2]

The work of the Kede canoemen, though lucrative and admitting of big profits, is strenuous, exacting, and not infrequently dangerous. They must be prepared to go on long expeditions, which still to-day may be expeditions into the unknown.[3] These river voyages mean long absence from home, often of many months, not only because of the distance of their destination, but also because of the many stops and long waits which they involve: thus the canoemen may have to wait in a certain place till the river becomes navigable again; or till they have filled their canoes with

[1] The division between fishermen and canoemen among the Kede is rarely rigid—members of a fisherman family may take to canoe-work or canoemen spend their leisure time fishing; we will ignore this division in the following and concern ourselves only with the canoemen, who are of most interest to us. Originally the Kede also used to build their own canoes. The deforestation of the river banks forced these craftsmen to move south, where to-day they form a small colony of Kede canoe-builders near Onitsha.

[2] The 'very lucrative' ferry service at certain riverports is mentioned in Laird and Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa* (1837), ii, p. 316. The most important ferry service of this kind to-day is at Jebba Island, where the Kede compete with the railway bridge, offering a cheaper service to the people who want to save the bridge toll.

[3] The journey from Kede country to Onitsha and back—one of their regular tours—takes two to three months. In 1936 I saw ten Kede canoes being loaded in Jebba with petrol for the French Air Service in Fort Nyameh. The river journey up the Niger was new to the canoemen, and was expected to take three months.